

THE VIGIL

REV. ABRAHAM YOHANNAN, PH. D.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY



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BY

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PREFACE.

The following notes have been taken from addresses which I have delivered from time to time in Columbia University and before the members of my Oriental congregation.

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CONTENTS.

- I. Annunciation.
- II. Nativity.
- III. The Magi.
- IV. The words of Jesus.
- V. He is fairer.
- VI. He is perfectly beautiful.
- VII. On temptation.
- VIII. On the expulsion.
- IX. Balaam.
- X. Blessing and cursing.
- XI. One day equals one life.
- XII. A preferable choice.
- XIII. To be great is to be simple.
- XIV. The full satisfaction of the soul.
- XV. A shining life.
- XVI. The Lord's Prayer.
- XVII. The lillies.
- XVIII. A sure rest.
- XIX. Love of God and love of man.
- XX. Jesus sleeping.
- XXI. The Mount of Temptation.

- XXII. The Master and the disciple.
- XXIII. A touch of life.
- XXIV. A touch of life (*continued*).
- XXV. The penitent woman.
- XXVI. The real joy.
- XXVII. The Shepherd of the sheep.
- XXVIII. The personal attractiveness of
Jesus.
- XXIX. Longing after God's presence.
- XXX. The kingdom of God.
- XXXI. The disciple whom Jesus loved.
- XXXII. Stephen.
- XXXIII. The offspring of God.
- XXXIV. Revenge.
- XXXV. A good soldier.
- XXXVI. The shadow of things.
- XXXVII. Christ the savour of death and
savour of life.
- XXXVIII. A deep-rooted love.
- XXXIX. A call to arms.
- XL. The fidelity of St. Luke.
- XL I. The unity of the law.
- XL II. Loving without seeing.
- XL III. The white stone.
- XL IV. A vanishing figure.
- XL V. Time for vigilance.
- XL VI. Time for work.

I.

ANNUNCIATION.

"AND THE ANGEL CAME IN UNTO HER, AND SAID: HAIL, THOU ART HIGHLY FAVORED, THE LORD IS WITH THEE, BLESSED ART THOU AMONG WOMEN." Such a salutation from an angel, sent on his errand by God, distinguishes Mary from all the rest of her sex, and lifts her higher in our esteem and veneration than any other of womankind. Beautiful with the graces of a holy womanhood, of all the maidens of the earth, the Holy Ghost chose not a daughter of empire, in a luxurious palace, but the Blessed Virgin Mary to be his sanctuary, and honored her lowly estate with the Motherhood of the Messiah. The memory of this blessed mother, so illustrious in her modesty and meekness, so hallowed by suffering, for the sword of anguish pierced her soul as the spear pierced the side of her Son, remains to us singular in its loveliness. Among women she is solitary in her sacred fame.

As far as we catch glimpses of her character, on the sacred pages, it seems retiring and re-

served. Her face is veiled, not made conspicuous in God's holy word. Yet, herein lies the rare excellence of her example. Before the daughters of the Church she stands a pillar of light, glowing in the grace of meekness, called by St. Peter the comely ornament of her sex.

If sometimes we long to know more of the Blessed Virgin's life, we nevertheless almost retract the wish at once. That saintly figure, withdrawn and standing in the shadows of the sacred scenes in Gospel history, gazing silently, in awe and love, up at the face of her most holy Son, and catching His golden words with a devout attention, teaches more effective lessons to our souls than if we saw her in a nearer and more prominent place, moving actively among the great events she witnessed. Without a paradox, her silence is her eloquence. In her significant humility lie the force and beauty of her pattern. Her attitude of meek attention is full of feeling—wise discourse. There is speech in that look of earnest thought, and that fixed gaze of adoration. Her soul, absorbed in heavenly themes and full of humble reverence and godly fear, is rapt in love, and we see in her the model of her sex, the holiest and purest, the better Eve and mother of a better Abel, blessed among women.

We shall find the brief records of her life rich with the material of edification. The small verse of our text is as a casket holding a costly jewel.

What grace, what loveliness and sanctity were united in her that she should be chosen of the Almighty to be shrine of His divinity, temple of the substance of the God-man! We should honor her for the gentleness of that humble and beautiful submission which replies to the angel who foretells her destiny: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me, according to thy word." We should honor her because God highly honored her by making her the sanctuary of the Holy Ghost. We should honor her because she was the casket of the brightest jewel of the universe, because she became the mother of our blessed Lord, the Saviour of the world. Do you know why Hannah chanted an ode of exultation and thanksgiving over the birth of her Samuel? And why, under the regimen of judges and dynasties of kingdoms, down through the centuries of the old economy, every Jewess longed so intensely for the dignity and joys of maternity? It was that, haply, far or near, she might be mother of the Messiah. No glory, gift of heaven, could

hallow mortal woman more than that of motherhood to the world's Saviour. And her prophetic tongue told truly, therefore, that all generations should call the Virgin blessed. We should honor her for her careful observance of her Son, and exemplary meditation of His words. We should honor her for the unspeakable sorrows which pierced her soul in all His sufferings, and for that constancy of faith which clung to His cross in His desertion, nor doubted His divinity, when His disciples were confounded.

Who does not feel what a privilege it were to sit for an hour and to look upon the breathing purity, the matchless tenderness of the Virgin who bore and nursed the Saviour of the world!

The pencil of fine art, through the ages of its exercise in the fingers of Giotto or Cimabue, of Correggio or Raphael, has delighted to hallow their genius by portraying the Virgin in the various circumstances of her history—a nimbus encircling her beautiful head, a lily of chastity in her hand, a star on her shoulder as she gave birth to the light of the world, a robe of blue and red expressing her heavenly devotion and love; her divine child usually held in

her arms, for He was the fount of all her grace and honor.

So impressive the story of her life, the example of her graces, that she has exerted immemorially a salutary influence on the minds of her sex through the Christian world; and the poet of the twelfth century has exquisitely described that influence in the line: "The Virtues of the Maiden made other ladies fair."

Her name Mary, whether for her griefs interpreted, as by St. Ambrose, "the bitterness of the sea," or by Isidore of Seville in the seventh century, *Stella Maris*, star of the sea, because her Son was "the light of the world"—her name has been given in baptism to thousands through the ages of our era. Though but a name, it is to us the image of sanctity shrined in beauty. We hardly know which most to feel for her—admiration or veneration or love.

II.

NATIVITY.

CORREGGIO paints the infant Jesus, with Mary and Joseph looking on in wonder, as lying in the stable, bright with glory, the very centre whence radiates all the light that shines upon their countenances and cheers an otherwise dim scene. This was truly "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of the people Israel."

Many were going to and fro in the inn at Bethlehem; disquietude and haste were there; they were unloading camels; caravans were making up their complement of passengers; the divan was motleyed with a spectacle of various costumes; barter, wrangling, mirth resounded. But hard by in a stable there was joy too deep for words, and silent adoration seemed to exclude the busy world, for Mary bent over her only-born, lying in a manger. Her head and Joseph's overflowed with bliss and angels gazed down upon the mystery of the holy incarnation.

The soul of man is like a noisy caravansary,

full of turmoil and unrest. But when Jesus is born there, when He enters and abides there, He reduces it to order and calms it to peace; and, though it move among the excitements and confusions of life, it has an inner stillness which they cannot invade or disturb. The King of Peace dwells there.

But Herod was troubled; Jerusalem was also troubled with him at the birth of the Prince of Peace. The tyrant unchained his ruffian warriors to massacre hundreds of innocent martyrs in cold blood. These hecatombs of infants were the first to bleed for Jesus, to redeem His life with theirs; God accepted the unpolluted sacrifice, their baptism of blood, and crowned them in paradise, foretasting their reward. It was a chapter of the Epiphany. The unwitting and unwilling tyrant wrote with his sword, wrote in blood, with lives for letters and with wounds for punctuation, an eloquent preface to the Gospel, published and read abroad long before evangelists were taught or apostles consecrated.

III.

THE MAGI.

WHO shall say how long in their eastern home the Magi watched for this blessed Epiphany in the heavens? How from their watch-towers they gazed forth upon the sky by night and day, wistfully yet untiringly, with patient eyes and hoping hearts? The heart of the unbelieving wearies, if its joy be deferred. It says, my Lord delays His coming.

The ages marched on, the sages waited. A lesson, the calm, the beautiful lesson of patience, had been learned—of awaiting with quiet acquiescence the will and hour of God. At length the time ripened. Redemption dawned on the nations. The signal fire burned in the heavens, and the wise men came to adore.

The word of God is close to thousands, and like the dumb beasts feeding in the stable where the Incarnate lay, they are unconscious of His advent.

"In all the religious orders of the ancient heathen world, there was somewhat of a scien-

tific and of a philosophic spirit. Their temples were colleges as well as shrines. The Magi, also, were learned; but their spirit was not distinctively the scientific. They were philosophers; but their spirit was not distinctively the philosophical. Science seeks for law in natural phenomena; and, finding it, seeks no further. Philosophy seeks for abstract truth, a mere notion of the mind. There is a spirit that avails itself of science and philosophy for an end beyond either, aspiring to the highest mysteries; a spirit that would pierce into the secret of the Being who is above nature, and who gives to truth, reality. Something of this spirit was the distinguishing characteristic of the Magi."

It is impossible for our souls to be satisfied without finding our Lord. His light floats, it moves before us like the star before the Magians, attracting our souls by its beauty, guiding us onward, still onward through the devious paths of life's pilgrimage, till it rests, at the close of our career, not over the cradle of Immanuel but before the throne of God.

Let us follow Christ from Bethlehem to Calvary with constant patience, from worship at the manger to weeping beneath the cross; from the rough cradle to the rougher cross.

IV.

THE WORDS OF JESUS.

“NEVER MAN SPAKE LIKE THIS MAN.” The words of Solomon were gracious, but the effluences of his inspiration, compared with the riches of the mind of Jesus, are but the tricklings of rivulets, to the exhaustless treasures of the clouds and the sea. A seraph plucked a live coal from the altar, and laid it on the lips of Isaiah, purging his sin; and the pages of this prince of poesy glow and burn with images of the humiliation, the conquests and the blessings of our Redeemer.

Men may shout with excitement at the speeches of orators, or applaud the sallies of wit and of mirth, or drink with the fatuity of a morbid thirst the melodies of poisonous verse; yet our sane souls feel the grace, the kindness and mercy of the words of Jesus. We admit them without qualification and without reserve. They come to us with the commendation of faultless truth, breathing their own inward divinity, transforming our frailty into virtue and our degeneracy into holiness.

Notice that marvelous sermon on the mount, in whose clear light the ethics of China and Persia, of Greek schools and Roman moralists fade as the stars at sunrise, and from which, too, our modern teachers may gather the only fit material for the systems they call moral philosophy. But they have not surpassed its justice and charity; they have not taught fraternal and universal love. Though they inculcate respect for our fellows' rights, they have not risen to the forgiveness of enemies. That doctrine startles the savage into amazement and surprises the philosopher into sneers. Even if we comprehend its grandeur in Christendom, without a living grace, without subjection of our souls to Jesus, it is very hard to own its attractions, yield daily to its gentle persuasions and reduce it to practice. To forgive enemies, to pray for injurers, to bless persecutors with a pitying heart, not with a coerced, reluctant tongue, is Godlike. It is sympathy with the Jesus who implored mercy for His murderers; it befits the child of God and is a distinction of Christians, a blessed and ennobling obligation.

It is Jesus that gathers together all the commandments of the ancient Mosaic law and the sentiment and teachings of the major and the

minor prophets, and fuses them into one in the alembic of the mind of Godhead. From them He distils the spirit of essential love and gives to all men, gives to rude simplicity, to childhood's self, two laws—love to God and love to man. These are to be the everlasting guide of mankind, to fill their hearts with happiness and lead their steps to heaven.

His lips spake the gracious word, then the doors of Paradise rolled back, and farther on the gates of heaven unclosed and golden homes of immortality, descried but dimly of old, shone in sevenfold light upon the eyes of faith, furnished and waiting for their guests, alluring souls with their ineffable delights. Ever since then, a fresher verdure grows upon the grave, and a gentler sorrow moves the mourner's tears, and hope is full of joy, and toil 'is easier, and holiness more beautiful.

V.

HE IS FAIRER.

"THOU ART FAIRER THAN THE CHILDREN OF MEN." The 45th is among the proper psalms for the feast of our blessed Lord's nativity. It is called an epithalamium, or bridal poem, and may celebrate the nuptials of Solomon with Pharaoh's daughter. The friends of the bridegroom greet him honorably and sound his praise, and then the maids of the bride magnify her beauty and rejoice over her ornaments.

Yet there are passages in the psalm which cannot relate to any mere man. We cannot say of the wise heir of David, "Thou art fairer than the children of men." No, a greater than Solomon is here. It is the bridal of the Lord with His church, all glorious. It is a chant of the renown of Jesus and the march of His conquests, until he gather the nations into His kingdom. He is "fairer than the children of men."

The Koran relates that guests at the table of Joseph's Egyptian master were bewildered at the young Israelite's beauty. He is a histori-

cal type of our Lord. Samuel tells us that David was "ruddy and of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look on." Daniel was "without blemish and well favored."

It was an attribute of our King of Kings; who was marred and disfigured in His humiliation; of whom Joseph and David and Daniel were but prophetic, and who doubtless appeared in the splendor of His celestial beauty in the opened heaven to the dying Stephen and to Paul on the road to Damascus. And so shall He appear to us. He is inexpressibly beautiful now; beautiful in the matchless model of His holiness. We shall see Him hereafter also with all the glorious, external signs of His excellence, in the mantle of His beauty, entrancing the eyes of the risen and the souls of the saved; surpassing our conceptions of the divinely beautiful, as the lily of Palestine surpassed the gorgeous, regal robes of Solomon.

Neither Scripture nor tradition has transmitted to us any satisfactory representation of the physical beauty of our Saviour. Art has not been able adequately to delineate Him. That partial description of His person in the letter of Publius Lentulus, corresponding with the features of Jewish youth of Palestine in His day, is also

deemed only of apocryphal value. Christ's nation was not famed for their works of art, like those skilful heathen sculptors who have handed down to us in marble the heads of the great Greek and Roman orators. Nor has the effigy on a medalion in the hands of the Moslem succeeded any better in worthily portraying Him. Even the ideal by the Swiss mystic and physiognomist, Lavater, is but a sketch of the characteristics of our Lord and by no means lovely. And all the essays made on canvas to portray Him, by so-styled sacred art, seem to us weak and unworthy. Such a picture disdains any kind of frame.

The representations of Christ are all failures because the artist can depict nothing above his own limited capacity of grandeur and holiness, for he can produce for us nothing more than his own frail mind can behold. For a like reason, no merely mortal pen, no intellect, however cultivated, exalted and enlarged, can of itself write down, as in the gospel, the character and the attributes of the God-man. None but God can portray the image of God.

It seems as if earthly genius were baffled in every attempt to delineate Jesus, as if human art, aspiring to picture the God-man, were paralyzed by its irreverence. Every essay proves abortive,

every ideal of Him proves utterly unworthy and below our conception; and His just similitude rises as far beyond human skill as the mysteries of God are beyond human imagination.

Artists gave Him the attractions of "the children of men;" but He was "fairer than the children of men." His divine loveliness was veiled in the simplicity of manhood. Its splendors, when He was transfigured, were almost intolerable to the eyes of His disciples; and the bright vision was in mercy clouded when He was so marred by misery that He had no form nor comeliness. His was the unearthly beauty that wakes not passion. It was said that devotion, lifting the heart heavenward, gave a rare beauty to Jewish maidens. His was of the interior soul, whose outlook chained His disciples, as when Mary sat rapt at His feet by the charm of its celestial sanctity, the attributes of the Son of God and the graces of the Son of Mary, in the harmony of their ineffable combination.

VI.

HE IS BEAUTIFUL.

"THINE EYES SHALL SEE THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY." In every soul, the most refined and the most simple, there is an admiration of beauty. And since it charms us in His creatures, why should we not regard it with delight in Him who is the divine source of it all? The presence of God, for whom we thirst, is beauty. The eye loves beauty and in God is the fullness of beauty. The harmony in the attributes of God is perfect beauty. Wherever there is a deformity in nature it serves but to enhance the abounding, all pervading beauty. Who does not sympathize with Faber and echo his line when he writes: "O God, how beautiful thou art!" We are happier for a vision of beauty. It is wiser to be attracted by the lovely than to be repelled by the harsh. And it is wiser to attract by the lovely than to repel by the harsh.

Christ is the noblest beauty of the world, the

radiance from which was made another and higher daylight for the world—another sun shining behind the sun. His beauty has reproduced the types of beauty that were never in the world before. They shine through history with a lustre beyond compare. Once, indeed, when He was transfigured on the mountain in the presence of the great law-giver and the translated seer of Israel, three elect apostles caught a glimpse of the resplendent beauty of His radiant divinity. Similarly we may imagine something indescribable and celestial in the glance before which forgiven Mary knelt and wept her penitent tears. And what His smile must have been! His smile was the sunshine of His heavenly spirit on His human countenance. I remember once, on asking a friend what was his idea of God and how God appeared to his mind, he answered: "As the smile of the universe. The smile of the Lord is the feast of the soul."

Though not here nor yet do we see the King in all the undiminished and unshadowed fullness of His beauty, yet we may fancy what dignity and sweetness must have been throned on His brow and His lip, and have glowed in His glance as He sat at the board of Martha and Mary and Lazarus. Contentment and peace and joy and love

were guests where Jesus sat. It was the radiance of the beauty of His soul. Students of the face say that, whatever the regularity of its features and the delicacy of its hues, it is tame and dull without mobility and without the power of expression—expression of the thoughts of the mind, the emotions of the heart, and the sentiments of the soul.

More than four hundred years ago was founded an Italian school, the subject of whose study was æsthetics. Their aim was through the admiration and culture of the beautiful to reach the good. Still earlier, in ancient days, it was a well-known maxim of the Greeks that, whether in architecture, or in music, in statuary, or in painting, whatever was beautiful was emblematic of the good.

Most of us have known persons who, without a claim to handsome features, have yet charmed us with the grace of their manners or fascinated us by their loving temperament and the riches of their discourse. To the forgiven sinner who hung gratefully upon the loving utterances of our Saviour's lips, to the ignorant fisherman who drank the revelations of His wisdom; to the righteous, adoring in transport the vision of His higher sanctity, it may be there was no thought,

no care for mere material beauty. Each knew not whether he or they were "in the body or out of the body." It was the music of His tender tones they heard; it was the wisdom of His incomparable instructions that they listened to. In these there shone the ravishing beauty and the burning glory that emanated from His heavenly inmost spirit.

Every virtue that revelation has disclosed, and our hearts can conceive, dwells embodied in His person and shines as an example for our study. His goodness flowed out of the essential love in His nature. His reverence was only His love looking with awe toward His Father, whose nature He shared; His sympathetic look on a blind, lame beggar or on the helpless infant with a soul capable of salvation or of perdition, was but the token of His love. His justice was His love, weighing merit or demerit impartially, and measuring reward or pain with the equity of infallible truth. His mercy was His love deducting from the rigors of chastisement on account of the blindness or feebleness of mankind. His purity, white and transparent as a robe of light, was but the raiment of His immaculate and unimpassioned love. His kindness was love for our kind—a brother's love for

humanity. His dignity was the seriousness of love, conscious of the grandeur of its mission, circled by the solemnities of suffering and marching on that measured way, the steps of which His prophecy had counted to the place of death. His self-sacrifice was love. Its history was love, beginning with exile from His glory, descending to become incarnate, born of the Virgin, then experiencing the miseries of the wretched, and quaffing that deep draught from the cup of sorrow, needless save to love, and dying not for Himself or for His faults, not for sinless saints and friends, but snatching from the records of eternity a glory unrivalled in the universe, to be an expiation of His enemies.

All the charms of virtue were in "the beauty of holiness" ere He "humbled himself to be born of a virgin," because He was "light of light, very God of very God," the only divinely begotten, "of one substance with the Father." Well might royal wisdom, in a song of songs hymning the nuptials of Christ and His Church, lavish on the portrait of His beauty the luxurious images of the Orient and yet fall as far short of the glory of the original even as the pictures of the senses fall below spiritual sublimity. In "the land very far off," where the redeemed may enter,—there art

Thou in all Thy beauty, O Jesus lover of our
souls, and we shall see Thy face, O King of
Kings.

VII.

ON TEMPTATION.

TEMPTATION is the test of grace; its issue determines our fidelity. To anticipate a period when the seduction and the trials will terminate, is to await an era of happiness that is destined never to dawn upon the declining world. A life without temptations would be at once inconsistent with the object of our creation and the character of our existence. The chimera of thinking otherwise is in itself a destructive temptation. It leaves its infatuated victims unguarded against the assaults of sin. Only when we anticipate an encounter with enemies do we arm in defense against their attacks. A sentinel who slumbers at his post may perish; and grace will die in the soul that fails to watch. In all temptation to evil there is an element of falsity. We are deceived and beguiled by the specious. In truth is life, in falsehood death. An ignis fatuus, a false light, leads the peasant in pursuit till he sinks into the morass.

Man without God is weaker than the fiend,

and forsaking God he becomes the ally of evil.

All the happiness we enjoy is a reason for our trust in God, and all our misery a reason for our distrust of Satan.

Do not venture to trifle with temptation; the bird that gazes on the serpent's glittering eye is fascinated till it loses the power of flight.

Rome's great captain paused and hesitated before he crossed that little stream, the Rubicon; upon the passage of that boundary hung the fate, the future of his country.

The first step is momentous; nay, every step has its definite and decisive effect upon our destiny. A resolute and quiet resistance of one temptation diminishes the power of each successive temptation.

Turn the mind at once to Jesus and fix it on Him; to whose calm purpose temptations were as harmless as fragile missiles hurled against a rock. This is the way to turn our water into wine. Remember, it is not you who are to conquer, but He who is to conquer in you. All the hostile elements are made tributary to His final triumph. Hang upon Him, and if you perish, perish where none ever perished before, at the feet of His mercy.

O, what wheels within wheels of temptations
are continually revolving around us! But one
day the battle will be over, the life of the camp
will end, we shall leave the tents of the warriors
for rest.

VIII.

ON THE EXPULSION.

LIFE in the garden on the banks of the Pison and Gihon, the Hiddekel and Euphrates was healthful, peaceful, joyous. Its grounds were refreshed with dews, not desolated by tempests.

From the lips of the innocent and immortal, as from the cups of flowers, the incense of devotion arose. Gladness, not weariness, waited on toil. There was no dread in the thought of God, but endless attraction. Morning after morning the sleepers waked to greet the light, zealous for His service. Heaven was on earth. Its tenants were at once with God. Immortality was the endowment of innocence.

In creatures sublime as Adam and Eve, fresh from their Maker's hand, with no depraved tendency, a longing after knowledge and pleasure seemed in itself both innocent and elevating. But God would have His children find His happiness in serving Him and feeding on the tree of life.

Knowledge is like a sword which may deliver

or destroy, or like riches that may corrupt or bless. The term philosophy means a love of wisdom rather than the wisdom, an experiment and not experience.

In the first of Dubufe's two great moral pictures, the Innocence and the Expulsion, the garden by the Tigris was beautiful with verdure and flowers, where the lower creatures lay in quiet trust of their lords, and the faces of the unfallen pair were lovely with the innocence that seemed a reflection of the serene sky above them. Their sin transformed the scene. In the second, the Expulsion, the beasts flee in rage and fright, the sky is black with tempest, and pours the chill torrents of the clouds down upon the cowering culprit, miserable pair.

IX.

BALAAM.

FROM the pinnacle of prophecy, with the eye of a seer, Balaam could trace the posterity of Israel in their victories, their possession of fertile Canaan, their multiplication until they equaled the stars of the sky in number; and when, at one glance, he embraced this vast and happy progeny and their honored ancestor, dying crowned with years and conscious of his increase, he cried out: "Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

However willing to earn the rewards of unrighteousness, Balaam could not curse, because the Spirit of God withheld him. His moral attributes were his own, but his inspiration was under the control of God, so that instead of a pagan's curse upon the people of God, we have, in the rhythmical lines of exquisite poetry, a benediction of Israel.

This renegade prophet was found in the ranks

of the Midianite host, and the text is his epitaph: "Balaam, also the son of Beor, they slew with the sword." As his eyes dim in death, his courtly honors seem also shadows and the gold he craved loses its lustre.

How vastly better if he had lived in steadfast humility and devotion in his house at Pethor, with God and the angels as tenants of its chambers, and his head crowned in death with the glory of the seer and the righteousness of the saint! Infinitely better to breathe our last with principle and poverty than with wealth in apostasy. If a Roman, whose courage was his virtue and whose patriotism his pride, could exclaim: "It is sweet and comely to die for our country." Shall not the lover of God and follower of Christ cry, though in straits and destitution, above all else: "Let me die the death of righteous?"

X.

BLESSING AND CURSING.

"BLESSED IS HE THAT BLESSED THEE, AND CURSED IS HE THAT CURSED THEE." How can we pray? We cannot pray to God with hatred in our hearts, or a curse upon our lips—since God is love. The curse would wither prayer. "He prayeth best who loveth best all things both great and small." And a prayer which implies fellowship with God requires the concord of our spirits with the Spirit of God.

It has been sometimes observed that implements devised for inflicting capital punishment have been used for the execution of the inventors. It is also true that men's blessings or their curses often return upon themselves. The idea is involved in the text. In some sense we are ourselves the authors of our fortune or our fate. As he who shoots his arrows at his foes sees arrows hurtling back, the man that scatters maledictions on the world discovers that they rebound upon himself and finds that

hostility to others engenders hostility to ourselves.

If a wrong deed be done us, banish retaliation. It doubles the wrong and makes two evils where but one existed. There is pain enough and harm enough already. Let us not increase the sorrow or the anguish of the world by answering curse with curse, but ameliorate it by our blessing, which softens suffering with its sympathy and brightens gloom as a sunburst chasing clouds away. We distinguish between love and wisdom. Yet nothing is wiser than love.

“The soft answer turneth away wrath” as the music from the harp strings of the son of Jesse soothed the frenzied soul of Saul.

XI.

ONE DAY EQUALS ONE LIFE.

“AND AS THY DAYS, SO SHALL THY STRENGTH BE.” Of the three natural divisions of time, determined by the circuit of the earth round the sun, of the moon round the earth and the rotation of the earth on its axis—of the year, the month, the day, choose the least, the day. Though least in duration, it is an epitome of the whole. A day is the miniature of a life. As a convex mirror suspended high in an apartment and a little inclined shows all the contents of the room in detail—all the persons and the appointments, though wonderfully reduced in size—so the day mirrors our life. A summary of one’s character, calmly reviewed when he is laid to rest and the sods of the cemetery have closed on his bosom, may be made from the history of an ordinary day—of its tempers, its habits and its deeds between his waking and his sleeping moments. With a little help of his divining thought one may see in the day the germs of a

lifetime. Since heaven provides for us day by day, it makes each day a little life. Each day is a pilgrimage and, without reference to the past or future, a cycle in itself complete.

Jesus has bidden us in sweet and solemn words to restrain our anxiety for the morrow, since the evils of each day may suffice to itself. Let our solicitude be bounded by the horizon of night. God requires our service now, simply between each rising and each setting sun; if thus considered, how much easier is our task! It is a trial not for a year but for a day, then for to-morrow, then for the next—for each day by itself alone. The work between our rising up and lying down is not so vast that it should overwhelm us. Surely we can accomplish much within those few hours. Care for the days, the years will care for themselves.

XII.

A PREFERABLE CHOICE.

"SOLOMON SAID, GIVE THY SERVANT AN UNDERSTANDING HEART." The wise and understanding heart wins all the rest—all else that is deserving of our aspirations and our efforts—what were all else without it? And what were long life without its wisdom and understanding but a life of imbecility, susceptible only of animal enjoyments.

The fate of a vestal virgin is suggestive. Tarpeia, daughter of the governor of the capital of Rome, agreed to open the gates to the Albans, the besieging foes of the city, on condition that each soldier would give her the bracelet on his left arm. As the leader entered the betrayed citadel, he threw her his bracelet but also cast upon her his shield. His soldiery, following his example, she was buried by the accumulated shields and perished beneath their weight.

The conclusion of Agur, son of Iakeh, seems founded on the study of man and the experience

of years—his desire to escape the extremes of penury or superfluity, "Give us neither poverty nor riches." Nearly akin to Agur was the saint of Persia, who, as a legend tells us, was visited by an angel and asked what gift he wished conferred upon him as a reward for his self-denying sanctity. Choosing neither treasure nor fame, nor the gratification of the senses, he replied: "Teach me to limit my desires by my needs." He did not yearn to enlarge the boundaries of his ambition or invent new pleasures for his appetites, but accounted what was necessary for his health sufficient for his tastes, and moulded his wishes into conformity with his wants. "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you."

XIII.

TO BE GREAT IS TO BE SIMPLE.

“MY FATHER, IF THE PROPHET HAD BID THEE DO SOME GREAT THING WOULDST THOU NOT HAVE DONE IT?” It is not always necessary to cause the heavens to bow in executing a heavenly work; the divine force may operate with efficacy, and be felt, when using the common elements in nature. Surely there was no charm in the waters of the River Jordan, though famed in sacred story and crossed by patriarchs, and used by seers, and hallowed since by Jesus’ feet and His apostles’ presence.

In the truly grand in nature, in letters, in art, there is still the simplicity that enables the unschooled and the young to apprehend and to feel. Think of the greatest of our poets, how now he wins our judgment by his truth-depicting nature, now moves us to sympathy by his pathos, now lifts us with him as on wings to the regions of sublimity by the eagle-like soaring of his imagination. So, also, if not indeed

in recondite knowledge, at least in the productions of genuine and meritorious art, in the best works of the painter, the sculptor, the architect, there is ever that divine truth, that secret harmony with nature that touches the heart of a child. They have called art the work of man, nature the work of God. But the work of man is a faithful reproduction of the divine in proportion as it observes the principles of nature or is a likeness of the work of God.

There is no character in all the records of this world's history so majestic as that of our Lord Jesus', yet none so meek, so gentle and so sweet. There are no utterances so sublime, no thoughts so grand as His in all the rolls and tomes of literature; yet none more simple in their doctrine, despite the sophistry of men. They are like His life.

XIV.

THE ONLY SATISFACTION OF THE SOUL.

"I SHALL BE SATISFIED, WHEN I AWAKE, WITH THY LIKENESS." A legend of the East tells of one that had passed hence into the unseen world. An angel accosted and asked what he would desire. He chose the gratifications of sense, lights and song, paintings, the music of instruments and luxurious feasting and hilarious companions. But sensual delights soon cloy, and when the heavenly messenger returned the surfeited voluptuary moaned that this long-lasting carnal pleasure had grown unendurable, the years appeared interminable. Then he implored, as if escaping from perdition, to be allowed a glimpse of holy heaven and to look on the occupations of angels and saints. But the vision of these celestial scenes so ravished his heart that when revisited by the angel he declared that the thousand years he had passed there seemed but a day.

There were knights of old, counting their profession sacred, who gave up their years—so say the old chronicles—in searching through all lands to find the sangreal, said to have caught the real blood from the Lord's pierced side upon the cross, and to have been borne in a precious vessel by the Arimathean to Glastonbury. However honest their misled devotion, their Lord was ever near to them without a pilgrimage; His chalice flowed in each communion.

No earthly good can appease man's desire. He is immortal, his organization refuses him content amid created joys. So immense are the wants, so endless the aspirations of the child of God that nothing less than He who created them all will suffice for its felicity. It is one token of our kindred with the Divinity, that, however marred the Father's likeness in us, the products of His hand alone do not satisfy our yearnings without Himself.

Could a single heart be made the home of all the transports earth can yield, they would not last; they soon would lose their power to charm.

XV.

A SHINING LIGHT.

“BUT THE PATH OF THE JUST IS AS THE SHINING LIGHT, THAT SHINETH MORE UNTO THE PERFECT DAY.” During a trip over the Zagros in the Kurdistan mountains, when the writer was up on a peak called Sipa Durig, while yet darkness was resting upon the mountains and was deeper in the vales, all forms and paths were indistinct. From the summit one could see the gray on the horizon yielding to the first faint light of dawn. Presently a little color streaked or suffused the East. A richer rose, a brighter fire, a sea of molten gold succeeded. An instant and the upper arc of the sun waved before my eyes; its full orb dazzled the sight; it gilded the crests of the mountains; the declivities were bathed in its light and, as it mounted, the valleys were reached by its radiance, to be greeted by the songs of birds and the sounds of insects. The traveller was no longer doubtful, nor mistook the objects he met, but sped on his journey with joy.

So the grace of the divine sun sheds on the path of the just its rays of truth and righteousness, and love and peace burn with a brighter intensity, shine more and more until the noon of perfect day.

Next I was struck with the flashes of the brilliancy of the sun when it was about to sink below the horizon, and the pale and lingering light after setting. I can never forget the lustre and the beauty. It shines upon my imagination with a manifold splendor ever since.

“The sweet remembrance of the just shall flourish, even when he sleeps in dust.”

XVI.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

THE Lord's Prayer—that form, how expressive, how comprehensive, how complete, yet how simple! On its wings the soul is lifted untrammelled and serene to God, as if it verily insured His presence, and embodied Him to our faith. Model of devotion. It is Jesus who breathes in us as we offer His own dictated words. As it is His, He joins with us as we pray His prayer.

A prayer is an epistle to heaven, and no earthly correspondent has ever answered us from afar with such fidelity and certainty as He. He is "more ready to hear than we to pray." He "gives more than either we desire or deserve."

There was, among the pagan Greeks and Romans a species of divination by the flight and cries of birds. The augur was not satisfied with a merely preparatory performance of his superstitious rites; after he had covered his head, marked out the heavens with his staff and uttered his prayer, he remained at his post to

watch the first appearance of the birds. He looked for a definite result. Some Christians, with the truth of God on their side, fall behind those heathens in the earnestness of their faith. They expect no certain benefit from their prayers. They do not await the benediction insured them by the promise of God to every true petitioner in the name of Jesus, and they fall into the mental habit of disconnecting prayer from its effect.

The real prayer goes to heaven, bound to find acceptance and "returns in answer of almighty power, as moisture goes up in vapor and returns in rain. Supplication, when it is according to scriptural conditions, commands divine interposition. Prayer is waiting for and welcoming the blessing as a returning stream from the heart of God, pouring back into and through the heart of the suppliant. While he calls, God answers—there is converse, intercourse, intercommunication. Prayer is not only speaking to God, but hearing Him speak in return."

XVII.

THE LILIES.

THE Syriac lily, or lily of Byzantium, with its bright, scarlet and turban-like flowers, flourishes from the Adriatic to the Levant, and is in bloom at the season when our Lord's sermon was preached.

The candidum, or white lily, grows in Palestine, and the varieties of wild and beautiful tulips abound there. There are also the lovely oxiolirion with its slender stem and delicate cluster of violet flowers, and the brilliant amaryllis, with its white petals streaked with vivid purple.

Look at one or other of these plants, its stem, its calyx and nectary, its pistil, stamens and anthers, its leaves and corolla of petals; look under the minutely discerning microscope at its symmetrical shape, its exquisite texture, its hues, its beauty—the faultless work of angels' fingers; the white raiment of Israel's princes, or the golden cloth of Solomon's attire, with its embroidery and embellishments betraying the

defects of the loom and the craftsman, is eclipsed by the flower of the field, as nature, the child of God, is superior to art or man's device.

A fragment of a blossom under a powerful microscope will appear as a series of cells, ranged in perfect order, like those in a honey-comb, or as the stones in a tessellated pavement. They hold the coloring matter of the flower. At first there is but a single cell, where the vital principle of the flower is lodged. In the moisture and warmth the germ drew food from the elements around it and formed a neighbor cell, then added another and another, until at length it spread a magnificent petal, a mosaic of cells, surpassing the pavement in the palace or temple of King Solomon.

XVIII.

A SURE REST.

"COME UNTO ME, ALL YE THAT LABOR AND ARE HEAVY LADEN, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST." This verse, with the two that follow, appears to be framed in poetical form, making a stanza of six lines in which the first and sixth lines are alike in word or thought, then the second and fifth, and last, the third and fourth agree, the parallels beginning from without and ending in the midst. To trace it, we should observe that "labor" refers to work under a yoke, and the phrase "heavy-laden" to the burden borne by a beast. Then putting these introverted parallels together, we might read the first couplet thus: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light"; the second couplet: "And I will give you rest, and ye shall find rest unto your souls"; and the third couplet: "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart."

We feel the music in the lines, even in our

English prose. A rich or useful thought, wedded to verse or clothed in forms of real beauty, is better fitted to cling to the memory, and may stand before us in a moment of temptation or amid the perils of grief. This text is one of those dear to a devout soul and rest-giving to a soul sorrowing for its sins.

It is not merely the rest which is a pleasant refreshment after exhausting fatigue; nor the rest of night after the labors of day; nor the bodily rest in the grave after the turmoil of life; nor the rest of a soul in Paradise when its tribulations are over. It is the rest of a spirit in the consciousness of the presence of God.

Moses failed of Canaan, but not of that rest of which Canaan was only a type.

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XIX.

LOVE OF GOD AND LOVE OF MAN.

OUR love of God is the original of all other true and holy love. Our love of man is but the blossom from this root, a rivulet from this eternal fount. We understand that it is by loving Him alone supremely we learn to love our fellows justly, and we do not wonder that near Him and in the contrast with His glowing excellence we despise ourselves for our folly and corruption. If there be any conflict between the love to Him and the love to kindred or friend, nail your recreant affection, though with a trembling hand, to the cross; jeopardize neither your own nor another's salvation; God will be loved above all things. Under His love alone can any other love be lawful.

God has made man, who is the image of Himself, an object of regard and love next only to Himself. Though gold be precious, we may not, for the possession of it, do wrong unto a man, who is more precious than it and merits our

regard, esteem, and reverence only next to God. Such love fulfills the external law of God and all the laws of the great universe wherein we dwell ; for everything depends upon love. "Even sacrifice resolves itself into love."

There is no proof of gratitude to God more precious than our love to man. No visions of our exalted faith, no ecstasies of our enchanted hope, can give us such assurance of His favor, or so prove us to be His children in His likeness, as our treading in the footsteps of His life and copying the deeds of His love. Of this robe of Christ we can touch the hem. There are ills which no treasures dug from the mines of Ophir can ever soothe ; kindness is unbought, but it is a treasure whose enchanting power by the grace of God, we may wield in blessings on the hearts. Without this the gloss of gifts is sullied and half their charm is lost.

XX.

JESUS SLEEPING IN THE SHIP.

HE slept, not only as an infant sleeps in guileless calm, as He slumbered in Bethlehem's stable without a thought of sin or sense of danger. It was not the sleep of Jonah in the Levantine storm, heavy because an opiate dulled his sense in the midst of perils, but nature's Master, as the God-man sleeps, holding the elements of creation in His grasp and making the universe secure. The tumult and confusion of the moment roused Him not.

The great Roman who gave his name to dynasties of emperors said to his trembling comrades on a tempestuous voyage: "Why fear? You carry Caesar." As if a numen guarded him or dwelt within him, there was a presumptuous confidence in the success of his arms and the power of his destiny. But Christ's reproof was gentle!

With Noah and his family the kernel of the old humanity was once contained in the ark tossed on the waves of the deluge; so the kernel of our new humanity, of the new creation in Christ

and his Apostles, was contained in this little ship driven on the sea of Galilee. And the Church of Jesus has ever resembled this tempest-tossed bark. The waves of the world rage horribly around it; and yet it has again and again and always been rescued from the perils just ready to overwhelm it.

By the Hindus of old the world was represented under the image of a great ship whose maker and pilot was God. A like figurative meaning lay in the sacred ship of the Egyptians, full of the images of their gods and borne in procession by their priests. The truth embodied in this symbol, as we know, is recognized in early Christian art by picturing the Church continually as a ship, and the winds personified fighting against it. Ever more the vessel is saved from destruction, because Jesus is in it. Roused by the prayers, the earnest cry of His servants, He rebukes these winds and waves before they quite engulf it.

XXI.

THE MOUNT OF TEMPTATION.

FROM the summits of the crags of the Mount of Temptation the eye is relieved only by a sight of the mountains of Arabia, the Dead Sea, and the plain of Jericho. On entering the plain one ascends to the left and after an hour's march arrives at Mt. Quarantania, which has received its name from the forty days of our Saviour's vigil and fasting, and from this height it is believed, the devil displayed to our Blessed Lord the vision of this world's kingdom and its glory. "It is an exceeding high mountain," of difficult and dangerous ascent. A small chapel is built on its top and another on a projecting rock midway upon its side, and nearby there are caves and recesses in the rough declivity of which, as of yore, hermits to-day keep their Lent, in imitation of our Saviour.

Here in these wastes, howling with the cry of the jackal and roar of the lion, where the crawling serpent may represent the guile of fiend or of

fallen man, the wild goat his impurity, and the tiger his cruelty, the gentlest Brother of our race, whose soul and body were the co-mate of Divinity, underwent His fierce trial for our assurance and example. No one more abandoned of men could be found on the earth than was our Saviour at that time.

It was at this moment of our Lord's weakness after the long fast that the devil tempted Him to fall down and worship him. The legend of a covenant with Satan, of a compact between good and evil, of the sale of a soul for short-lived glory, riches, power, is an allegory daily rendered into fact, with this qualification, namely, that the victim hopes sometime and somehow to escape the effects of his iniquity or to purge it at last by a misunderstood repentance. There is only one escape from the worship of the devil, and that is the worship of God.

XXII.

THE MASTER AND THE DISCIPLE.

FROM the earliest times there have been schools in the East—the cradle of mankind—schools in Egypt, schools in Palestine, schools in Greece. Students of one land visited another to listen to the lectures of its doctors, as Plato sought the sages of Memphis. The youth of Moses was nurtured in the East and he mastered all its learning. Hence the warning of our Saviour, the greatest of Eastern teachers, was salutary and important. Every one that is perfect shall be as his Master.

There should be such correspondence of spirit between teacher and scholars that the pupil's life shall be like His. Aristotelians were known by their adoption of the philosophy of their master and their conforming to his life. The strict Pythagorean was learned in the maxims of Pythagoras and was a true copyist of his practices. "We be Moses' disciples," said the punctilious Pharisees.

The Hindu Krishna said to his pupil, Arjuna :
“They whose understanding abides in God, whose
unchangeable trust is in Him, are purified from
all offences, are inspired by His divine wisdom.
He is the asylum of their souls on earth and they
rise to dwell with Him forever.”

Christ held the living picture of the Master up
and bade His followers copy it into their own
characters.

XXIII.

A TOUCH OF LIFE.

"IF I MAY TOUCH BUT HIS CLOTHES I SHALL BE WHOLE." A sermon, ascribed by some to St. Ambrose, makes this woman to have been Martha, the sister of Lazarus. Another legend, that of the gospel of Nicodemus, calls her Veronica, the compassionate woman who is said to have given a kerchief to our Saviour on His way to death, the folds of which received the bloody impress of His features, the likeness of His sacred countenance. Eusebius relates a story, strange and full of difficulties, of two statues in brass, figures of Christ and of this woman kneeling before Him. They were extant at Caesarea Panease in the historian's time and had been raised in gratitude by the devoted woman in commemoration of her cure. So widely spread was the belief that these statues referred to this event in the Gospel, that Julian or Maximinus, in hatred against all memorials of Christianity, destroyed them.

If we should repeat some of the prescribed methods of cure, as they are recorded by Dr. Lightfoot, the science of our enlightened physicians would readily perceive how the remedies must have aggravated instead of mitigating the disease of the suffering woman. Here are a few out of many examples:

Rabbi Jochanan says: "Take of gum Alexandria, of alum and garden crocus, the weight of a zurse each; let them be bruised together and given in wine to the woman. If this fail:

"Take of Persian onions nine logs, boil them in wine and give it her to drink; and say, 'Arise from thy hemorrhage.' If this fail:

"Set her in a place where two ways meet and let her hold a cup of wine in her hand, and let somebody come behind and affright her and say, 'Arise.' Should this do no good:

"Take a handful each of cummin, of crocus and of faenugreek; let these be boiled and given her to drink and say, Arise (as before). If this also fail:

"Dig seven trenches and burn in them some cuttings of vines not four years old, and let her take in her hand a cup of wine and let her be led from this trench and sit down over that, and let her be removed from that and sit down over

another, and in each removal say unto her, 'Arise from thy hemorrhage.'

If by some of these prescriptions it is evident the patient could not have been healed, it is clear that by others she must have been harmed. And it is manifest from all of them together that she "had suffered many things." The expense attending her long illness, the cost of medicaments, the number of persons employed, for she was not a woman of great affluence, had reduced her to poverty. All that she possessed had been wasted in the vain search for health and alas! she was "nothing bettered," says the sacred narrative, "but rather grew worse." In the apocryphal report of Pilate to Tiberius, he paints the extreme emaciation of this woman from her complaint as such that the joints of her bones appeared as if shining through crystal.

Since the great Physician told her afterward, "Thy faith hath made thee whole," we see that her confidence in His restorative power—the faith which drew her to His person and made her touch His garment—if not well taught and unalloyed, was yet most real, vivid and intense.

XXIV.

A TOUCH OF LIFE (*Continued*).

"SOMEBODY HATH TOUCHED ME, FOR I PERCEIVE THAT VIRTUE IS GONE OUT OF ME." There was no labored effort of Christ, no depletion of His energies, no expenditure of power which He must regain by tonic agencies or rest, or even by fresh inspirations from on high. It was simply an effluence of healing virtue from His divinity drawn forth by faith.

In some whose bodies seem surcharged with magnetism there is a capability of conveying electric streams to excited, pained or fevered forms with soothing, and even with healing efficacy. The transmission demands no credulity on the part of the person to be relieved, but mere proximity or a slight exertion from him who relieves. What is necessary, however, is always a receptive condition.

It was Jesus Christ of whom St. John says: "In Him is life," and who says of Himself: "I am the life." Yet of all the crowd that swayed

around Him and pressed upon Him, the afflicted daughter of Israel alone, by the force of her faith, called forth the power of His beneficence in her bodily infirmity. If any of God's threatenings be the object of faith, faith takes the shape of fear. If a divine promise be the object, faith takes the form of hope. If Jesus be the object of faith, it takes the form of love.

We cannot choose but concede that from Him flows down, flows ceaselessly, flows through all the universe, life with all its agencies, inspiring, sustaining and recuperative. From the ambient atmosphere we breathe His life and love. No nature is so rugged that the grace of God, freely admitted, cannot transform it.

We cannot grasp the body of Christ, but if we can merely touch the hem of His love and life, virtue then flows out for us better than all human medicines to heal our infirmities.

XXV.

THE PENITENT WOMAN.

"A WOMAN STOOD AT HIS FEET BEHIND HIM WEeping AND BEGAN TO WASH HIS FEET WITH TEARS, AND DID WIPE THEM WITH THE HAIRS OF HER HEAD, AND KISSED HIS FEET, AND ANOINTED THEM WITH THE OINTMENT." With a holy prescience of His passion she came as if to give Him unction and embalm His body for burial. She anticipated the hour as if inspired by a heavenly presentiment, and well indeed, because in such haste was our Saviour's corpse taken from the cross and buried there was small time for embalming. The Marys came early on Easter morning to the tomb with spices, but Jesus was risen; it was then too late for this work of piety.

Why is she there, a weeping penitent and perhaps ostracized by her sex unless to teach us reverence and friendship for Christ? Why kneels she there, shedding showers of ceaseless sorrow

on His stained and naked feet, by which feet no kneeling penitent was ever spurned? If Berenice's votive tresses, hung in a Goddess' temple at Cyprus, were feigned by Conon to be carried to the skies and made a constellation, if an apostle call a woman's hair her glory, why does she droop the luxurious beauty of her locks to this lowliest office and wipe the moisture from those blessed feet, but to teach her successors an unfeigned and unshamed humility as well as adoration of the true God-man. Why does she lavish the kisses of her lips, all unforbidden, upon these least honorable and most honored members of His body, unless to imprint on the heart a thousand burning mementos of gratitude for Jesus and kindle its affections into sympathy with her transport of love for the "altogether lovely." Why break the precious vase's neck and shed its odorous contents there, so as to anoint the bruised and foot-sore, or prospectively to embalm the dead, except to pour scorn upon a parsimonious piety, to prove no gift too costly, no talents too eminent to be consecrated to Christ? Whether He be honored in His Church or in His poor, it is to inculcate on His disciples a lesson of self abandonment to signify that their fairest merits shall be buried in

His atonement, their surest hopes be founded in
His mercy and their souls be offered to Him by
an eternal devotion.

Love much, for much has been forgiven.

XXVI.

THE REAL JOY.

“NOTWITHSTANDING, IN THIS REJOICE NOT, THAT THE SPIRITS ARE SUBJECT UNTO YOU ; BUT RATHER REJOICE BECAUSE YOUR NAMES ARE WRITTEN IN HEAVEN.” One may feel longing for the power of miracles and yearn for some tangible assurance in religious matters which spoils the simplicity of the faith. Our Saviour does not encourage the enticing wish to grasp the unseen—the witness of the senses. The powers we already possess are images and reflections of the Deity. With such a parentage, with “names written in heaven,” we rejoice in the unspeakable honor and need not ask for rarer gifts, need not exult in startling novelties, like taming or expelling demons.

Thirsting for that highly estimated fame, whose trump is noisy, but whose voice is so often false, a host fell from seraph’s thrones to an abyss of gloom. Our glory is not ours, is not original ; let us lay it at the feet of Christ. Since

all we are we have received, let us lose our self-hood in our fount of life—Him who is all in all. Glory not in power, possessions, or in the repute of a name, but glory in this, that our “names are written in heaven.”

In various kingdoms there was kept a book of life, wherein was written the birthday of each subject—his day of entrance into life. At his death, or when disfranchised for gross crimes, his name was stricken out. In the Lamb’s book of life, too, there is a like record on high of the hour of our regeneration.

Providence is so much wiser than we; simple obedience is so much safer for man. Goodness is better than power. It is more godlike to be a saint than even to be a sage.

There are men who may not have inscriptions on tablets with their titles, or statues standing in niches, or monuments in public squares, whose names may not be chronicled in history and the tale of whose life no poet sings, but still have a shrine in the loving hearts of their fellows and their “names written in heaven.”

XXVII.

THE SHEPHERD OF THE SHEEP.

AMONG the symbols on the walls of the chambers of the dead in the catacombs, those subterranean burial places of the persecuted saints, was that of the good Shepherd, a strong and lovely youth, one hand holding a crook or flute, the other holding the lamb that was borne on his shoulders.

The portion of the allegory from which the book "Shepherd of Hermas" derives its title begins thus: "After I had been at home and sat down on my couch there entered a man, glorious in appearance and dressed in white goat's skin like a shepherd, with a wallet on His shoulders, a staff in His hand, and saluted me. When I had greeted Him in turn, He sat down beside me and said: 'I am sent by a Venerable Angel to dwell with thee for the rest of thy life.' As I feared some temptation and manifested my distrust, He said: 'Dost thou not know Me? I am that Shepherd to whom thou art committed.' Then His

figure was changed and I knew it was He, and was filled with grief and shame for the doubts I had betrayed. Then He bade me to take courage, that I might observe the commandments and similitudes which He was sent to dictate. Keep them, therefore, and walk in them, all ye who read them and hear them. For all these words did that Shepherd, the Angel of Repentance, command me to write."

Giotto, as a youth, was a shepherd, before he was an artist. We have a piece from the pencil which depicts the pastor. The scene lies in the Orient. The young shepherd, with a look of love on his face for his flock, is playing the flute. Some of the sheep leave their browsing and stand listening to him. Others lie down, content, and with an upturned glance, bespeaking their trust in their protector and guide. A shepherd in the East does not follow, but precedes his flock, where the sheep are not driven, but led. They recognize his voice.

XXVIII.

THE PERSONAL ATTRACTIVENESS OF JESUS.

THERE was such a charm in the personal presence of Jesus that not only His near and chosen friends but crowds, unconscious of the reason, loved to linger by and look and listen. There was such resistless truth in His lessons that they drank them in as revelations from the skies. There was such love in His glance, His speech, His works, that His attendants were certain of His sympathy. All estates, all occupations, all ages, felt the attraction. Satan and his followers were the exceptions. They too felt, but resisted His sway.

Christ contemplates the plan of winning our hearts by His being lifted up from earth, by which we may understand either His crucifixion or His ascension, or both. He ascended into heaven not to sunder but to perpetuate the tie.

Neither heaven nor earth contained a nobler

oblation. Neither heaven nor earth could exhibit diviner love.

And this love generates reciprocal love. One can hardly resist the direction of His love toward those who truly love Him, as steel to the load-star.

And since He would draw us to Him, let us scale the interval that parts us from heaven, and piercing the firmament, "in heart and mind thither ascend and with Him continually dwell."

XXIX.

LONGING AFTER GOD'S PRESENCE.

"LORD, SHOW US THE FATHER." The Hindu, dissatisfied with the fanciful myths of his clime and full of a devout aspiration after God, cried, with the anguish of an irrepressible earnestness: "O show me thyself."

To look on the face of Deity was the desire of Semele, who besought Jupiter to visit her in the effulgence of his majesty. Agreeably to the fable, he came in clouds, in lightning, in thunderbolts and she was consumed by his fires.

Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. There is no vocation, no department of letters or learning or art in whose mysteries one can become an adept, or even whose terminology one can understand without study. We cannot know a person whom we neglect or shun.

In the yearning of his unsatisfied soul for the eternal, the fancy of the Hindu has embodied this desire in feigning that there have been many Avatars or descents of the Deity in the

flesh. Parsis revered divinity in the emblematic fire and Greeks adored Apollo in the sun. Arabia worshipped the sun and stars, and that religion was called Sabean from the name of their land or for the honors paid to the host of heaven. Mythology heard the voices of deities in the winds, in the blasts of Aeolus or the breath of Zephyr. It peopled the fountains with naiads and the woods with fauns. Ephesus vaunted the jewelled image of Diana fallen from the skies, and Athens filled its streets with statues of gods of all lands. These fabulous inventions could only satisfy the sense; the immortal hunger of the soul was still unfed.

Unless God discloses Himself, our depraved imaginations cannot conceive of Him aright. We know Him only as He discloses Himself, and He leads us on as we are able to follow.

XXX.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

“MY KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD.” For its emblazoned coats of arms on banners, escutcheons and panels, heraldry has borrowed its strange shapes, its wivern, its griffin, its unicorn, from those emblematic creatures of prophecy, those monstrous forms of beasts designed to figure to us the monstrous propensities that have ruled the minds of worldly potentates or characterized the policy of worldly powers. They stand, those images, for lust, rapacity, tyranny and terror—elements that reign over a depraved and fallen world. But in the kingdom of the saints, as under a new heaven and on a new earth, where the Holy Ghost presides and is adored, not the claws of the leopard, the talons of the eagle, the teeth of the bear, are our arms; not jealousy or cupidity or rage or hate is our law; but veracity and justice, peace and love. Not His is the Takht Jamsheed, the material crown. Not His, the sword of them that “perish by

sword," the clash of arms, the mutilated limbs of strife, the corpse-strewn battlefield.

The emblem of His kingdom is the dove from the ark, silver winged in its celestial beauty, harmless, not ravenous, not with a beak tearing its prey or with plumage bristling for battle, but the guileless, gentle bird of peace—a token that the waves of desolation are assuaged.

The progress of the kingdom of God is made not with the sling or the javelin, maiming and crushing human bodies and desolating human homes and hearts. Its elements are righteousness, peace and spiritual joy. What can heaven be more than these, save that, there beyond, the righteousness is eternal, the peace is eternal, the joy is eternal.

XXXI.

THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED.

WE cannot read these words without an interest in the man loved by Him whose love is life itself. His love for Christ was unobtrusive but profound. There is stillness, there is retirement. He is scarcely named alone or named as chief. So often among the first in position, he is quiet and unassuming. If, in the narrative, he is mentioned as companion of his brother James, then James is first, as senior: it is "James and John, his brother." John is present, but, if not silent, he is not foremost.

When Jesus, seized by officers, was led to trial and no other friend stood by, this young man followed to the place of peril and was admitted. His modesty withheld his name and left us only that description of a faithful follower.

The next scene of danger was the cross. Who would have courage to be there? St. Peter had denied Him and departed, weeping bitterly. St. James and the others had forsaken Him and fled.

But "there stood by the cross of Jesus that disciple whom He loved," he was present, but without display; he stood there, silent, fearless, but calm.

And next, the tomb would be a place of danger; here, John was first, first at the place of danger, and did outrun the impulsive Peter.

Then there was tranquillity in his devotion and meekness in his reverence. St. John, by the instinct of his love, first recognized the speaker on the shore: "It is the Lord." Simon girt on the fisher's coat, upon hearing this, and plunged into the sea. The younger son of Zebedee remained, silent, waiting, blest and full of love.

Hence we learn the character that Jesus loves. It is one itself full of loving devotion; free from pretentious display, unobtrusive, unselfish and calm; fearless of consequences in the reality and fervor of its attachment—a soul occupied through life with the thought and the service of its Lord.

XXXII.

STEPHEN.

“AND THEY STONED STEPHEN . . . HE KNEELED DOWN, AND CRIED . . . LORD, LAY NOT THIS SIN TO THEIR CHARGE.” Amid the anguish of his violent death, there was the serenity of Charity in the soul of the saint. “To err is human, to forgive divine.” His prayer to Jesus was again like that of Jesus to His Father on the cross: “Forgive them.” With spirit molded in the lessons and example of his Master, he prays for his foes amidst their wicked torments and his most cruel pains.

The words that close the chapter and the story are these: “When he had said this”—his last prayer—“he fell asleep.” How sweet the sleep—a sleep indeed in Jesus when the last words are words of love.

St. Augustine writes: “If Stephen had not prayed, the Church had not won St. Paul.” Saul was guarding Stephen’s clothes while being martyred. Doubtless he had heard the young

deacon's arguments for Jesus, irresistible with the eloquence of the Holy Ghost, and noted well his wisdom, his divine tranquillity, his fortitude, devotion and forgiving charity. All the incidents in this spectacle of martyrdom, it may be, left their impress on the soul of Saul and prepared him for the revelation on his journey to Damascus. Bear in mind that St. Luke wrote this very record in the Acts under the supervision of St. Paul.

Yes, the young deacon "fell asleep." His name, Stephanos, means crown, and he put on the crown of martyrdom. He died, a witness to the truth, the mission, the Messiahship of Jesus—and more to the inspiring power of His divine Charity, since among all the graces flaming in his martyr's crown, the most radiant, heavenly and precious is the gem of love.

XXXIII.

THE OFFSPRING OF GOD.

“FOR WE ARE ALSO HIS OFFSPRING.” St. Paul enjoyed a great advantage when reasoning with the representatives of the several Greek schools gathered on the hill to hear his new doctrine of the Gospel, on account of his acquaintance with the classic authors of their clime. He meant to show them that he was not, as they suspected, “a setter-forth of strange Gods,” as that with them would have been a capital crime, but was only preaching the attributes of one whom, in their much veneration, they had already honored with a place in their pantheon—“the unknown God.”

In his defense St. Paul quoted very effectively against both the idolaters and sophists of his audience, writers acknowledged as authority by the scholars of their nation and age. And many other thoughtful listeners, besides Dionysius and Damaris, must have felt the force of his logic, at the conclusion of his argument. Some of

the admired and oft-cited heathen poets have proclaimed our human origin divine. Cleanthes, in his hymn to Jupiter, has sung: "We are his offspring." The same expression was used three hundred years before St. Paul's time by Aratus, a native of St. Paul's own province, Cilicia, when in his book called "Phaenomena," he wrote of the divine being in these words: "We also are his offspring."

Socrates imagined that he had an attendant and monitory demon, and this Greek sage sacrificed a cock to Aesculapius before being executed; nevertheless, it was he also, who almost seerlike proclaimed, four hundred years before the incarnation, that God must come down to earth to enlighten us concerning His will and our destiny.

XXXIV.

REVENGE.

ONE of the horrible sentiments of depravity is expressed in these few words, "Revenge is sweet," which might be imagined under the device of a tiger luxuriating beforehand in the blood of a victim he is about to devour. Nations have gone to war, to avenge—as they have phrased it—their insulted honor, thus offering to private citizens a forcible example, whose imitation they punish.

It is a law among certain uncivilized tribes that the kinsman shall avenge by blood a murder in his family, the individual hand executing capital punishment in lieu of the state, as in the rude youth of this race and under a temporary economy of religion, the law of talio, or of like for like, was tolerated.

Feuds between Arab clans are perpetuated from generation to generation. Fear of vengeance for some murder keeps clans apart, feeding their flocks in separate pastures, and guarding themselves in distant camps.

Let us have nothing to avenge, and let us refuse to revenge ourselves. It is more heroic to die with patience than in wrath, like the resigned Dalmatian captive who died pierced by the gladiator's sword in the Arena at Rome. His eye is clouded as the blood oozes from his death-wound, but his soul is not clouded by a thought of vengeance. His thoughts are far away, with the wife to be widowed and the little boys playing in the woods on the borders of the Danube.

The spirit of Christ's martyrs was a reflex of the spirit of their Lord. Amidst the anguish of the cross, Jesus did not call down bolts of wrath upon His foes, but prayed, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do."

XXXV.

A GOOD SOLDIER.

"ENDURE HARDNESS AS A GOOD SOLDIER." There are carpet knights who know nothing of an army's adversities, of the cannon's din, the hail of balls, and the clash of steel, and know only of the tales of heroes and the show of glittering bannered troops in times of peace.

Were they spiritual combatants, these could not teach us the lessons of religious endurance and earnestness. For the Christian life is not a parade for the admiration of spectators, not a sham battle without the encounter of a dangerous foe, not a gala day display, but a serious conflict.

An imperial guard or a legion of invincibles will be expected to show steadiness and endurance, a devotion to their service and feats of valor befitting their title. Equal obligations rest upon Christians if worthy of their rank; not least among these is the obligation to endure adversity with cheerfulness.

There is a power in conviction, an inspiration

in hope. When storming the fortifications of Malta the besieging soldiery, in the enthusiasm of their assault, impetuously scaled the walls and possessed themselves of the stronghold, which, a few days after, in hours of idle indifference, they could not by their utmost efforts ascend.

In the annals of old Greek warfare, and in our modern strifes, we have seen a pass between mountains held by a small band of heroes against an army of thousands, or a fort kept by a diminished garrison with scant supplies until the assailing legions, tired of their ineffectual onset, raised the siege. On the open field we have witnessed a single rank, bearing the shock of a superior host, the thinned but unbroken line closing again and again until succor came and the tide of battle turned and victory remained with perseverance.

Champions of Christ contended earnestly for the faith. They were banished, they were burned, but their spiritual arms beat down the weapons of steel; gentle graces shamed bloody purposes into irresolution and won kings and philosophers and slaves to confess the Christ, and kneel before His cross and learn truth and love.

XXXVI.

THE SHADOW OF THINGS.

“FOR THE THINGS WHICH ARE SEEN ARE TEMPORAL, BUT THE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SEEN ARE ETERNAL.” One sees a *fata morgana* in the air above. A landscape with its knolls and shrubs and brooks, or a town with its walls and towers, its houses, domes and spires, is mirrored in the sky. It is an optical image, possible under certain luminous and atmospheric conditions—a reflex of a scene on the earth below. The vision is brief, but not more shadowy and fleeting than the cities we dwell in. The earth is full of the sepulchres of such spectral abodes. These crumbling phantasies are figures of a grand eternal and unseen reality. “For here,” says inspiration, “we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.”

Or again—a novice travelling with a caravan in Arabia and consumed with thirst, sees on the distant sands the semblance of a lake, green groves beside it. It ever alludes and disappoints

him as he draws near. It is but the shimmer of sun rays in the air reflected from the heated sands.

Permeated with a sense of the transitory, in all mundane good, and smitten by a view of the puerility of ambition and the error of covetousness, the eloquent English statesman, Burke, exclaimed: "What shadows we are and what shadows we pursue!"

Yet, let us remember, that the casting of a shadow implies the existence of a substance. There is a religious reality. "According to the parables of our Lord all nature is sacramental, our life, our being is sacramental. A sacrament is "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace."

XXXVII.

CHRIST, THE SAVOUR OF DEATH AND SAVOUR OF LIFE.

THERE is a well known legend of Saint Veronica. The holy Matron, full of compassion, as our Lord bore His cross along the way of grief, gave him a handkerchief which he pressed to His face, wet with the blood trickling from His temples. It is said that he returned it to her and that it bore the impress of His features. If we but transpose the letters of the name Veronica, it would make Vera icon, signifying by a fanciful etymology, true image.

If this tradition seeks to embalm some act of loving piety we have in the idea of the Wandering Jew another legend, embodying an illustration of the prolonged punishment of sin. Ahasuerus, for an indignity to our suffering Saviour, on His way to Calvary, was condemned to live on through wearisome ages, from whose dull revolution he could not escape by plunging into the vortices of the sea, or the crater of a

volcano, or the carnage of battle, or the infected
airs of epidemic plagues.

To the soul estranged from God this life is
hopeless and has its image in the gloom of Cal-
vary at the crucifixion of our Lord. To the soul
at one with Him, all life is hopeful and radiant
with the light of the night of His birth or the
morn when he rose from the tomb.

XXXVIII.

A DEEP-ROOTED LOVE.

“BEING ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN LOVE.”
Palmyra merits its name for the number of palm trees that thrive in the waste. But the traveller who sees only a desert around, with neither spring nor stream to nourish vegetation, wonders from what source these trees receive refreshment and vitality. Not until men had dug deep, deep down through the sands, was it discovered that their rootlets and thread-like fibres had penetrated to an almost incredible distance below until they found water, which they drank through countless pores for the sustenance of their life. The environs are like the arid wild of the world, offering to righteousness little promise of thrift. But, deeper than the superficial depth of human philosophers, far down into the inexhaustible font of divine love, stretch the thirsty roots of our religious life.

Not only, rooted like the oak or the palm but

also "grounded in love" should be the true disciple and follower of Christ.

Not because the Gnostics used such words in their mystic vocabulary as "length and breadth and depth and height," but because of the immensity of the love of God in Christ and the beauty of the vision of His self sacrifice, does the apostle break forth into that rapturous exclamation: "that ye being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." Even then in its fullness we cannot grasp it, any more than Archimedes could find a fulcrum on which to rest his lever in order to move the world or our finite mind could embrace infinity.

XXXIX.

A CALL TO ARMS.

“WHEREFORE TAKE UNTO YOU THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD.” In the days when swords and arrows and slings were used, instead of firearms, the soldier that went to engage in conflict without being covered by armor risked a wound in the part exposed and hazarded death. The Romans through their unshod feet were pinned by the Parthian javeline to the ground. Homeric story tells us that Achilles was mortally wounded through his heel, the only vulnerable part, as his mother had held him by that when she dipped her child in the immortal stream. Through but one weak or open place, the joint of his armor, an arrow pierced Ahab, giving a fatal wound.

If toleration be granted to a single fault, we are no longer covered by the whole armor of God, and the gate is open ample enough for the entrance of destruction. Let our whole heart be sanctified, our whole will be shielded from contact with evil.

Those sins which endanger each one most are called his well-circumstanced, or easily-besetting sins. They attack us when opportunity is most favorable—in our weakest moments with their greatest force—or, when we are least watchful, they steal with subtlety upon us, like foes in ambush, and surprise the heedless into transgression.

Without divine sustaining grace our determination may seem to be stout and brave, afar from danger in our safe retreat; but in the front of persecution we may shrink or, when our zeal is needed, we may droop, as, when Icarus would fly from Crete, his waxen pinions melting in the sun, he fell into the sea.

We never fall without our own consent. We are invulnerable except through our will.

XL.

THE FIDELITY OF ST. LUKE.

"ONLY LUKE IS WITH ME." The accomplishments of St. Luke, elegant scholar as he was, lay like the features of a lovely landscape shrouded by the darkness until the light of Christ, the resplendent Sun of righteousness, rose on his soul and drew its treasures forth in heavenly beauty. Vale and copse, and lake and knoll, and flowered crevices of mossy rock, all then became illuminated.

What a lesson is enshrined in the ministrations of St. Luke to the infirm, imprisoned, aged Paul, whom he remained with till the sword of Nero separated them! How affecting are those few words of Paul to Timothy: "Only Luke is with me!" What a consolation to Luke himself must have been this remembrance of his own fidelity, when borne on his heart at the latest hour of his life, whether he was hanged on an olive tree in Greece or died in the calm of his retirement, more than fourscore years of age.

Every gift of heaven imposes upon us an obligation. We may not have the privilege of serving an apostle in his imprisonment, but we can serve our Lord Jesus Christ through His humble disciple.

The faith of the idolatrous Sabeans beheld God in the sun and host of stars; the Parsi beheld divinity in his emblematic fire, and the quickened soul of Christ's disciple will discern His image in his brother.

God has made man, who is the image of Himself, an object of regard and love next only to Himself.

XLI.

THE UNITY OF THE LAW.

“FOR WHOSOEVER SHALL KEEP THE WHOLE LAW, AND YET OFFEND IN ONE POINT, HE IS GUILTY OF ALL.” One cannot separate one hue from the prismatic seven without dimming or distorting the pure ray of light they compose.

Any single commandment contains in itself the other nine. The decalogue is a “tree yielding fruit after his kind whose seed is in itself.” In a tree there are so many different portions; the tenacious roots in the soil, the sturdy trunk, the protecting bark, the nourishing sap, the leafy lungs, the blossoms of beautiful prophecy, the consummated fruit, with another generation of seed in itself, and yet all of these varied parts, one in essence, are wrapped up in the shell of a kernel or seed. Thus each commandment infolds the rest; it has their germs and would develop them under the warm breath of the spirit. All the ten are so blended and combined that they share a common essence and the embryo of all is found in each.

A wise Greek—Aristotle—whom, for his proficiency, his master called a “lover of truth,” speaking of the virtues, shows them so linked together that if a man possess one virtue in perfection, he will of necessity possess the rest.

It is true of the graces of a Christian character. They are mutually dependent. Humility and courtesy, for instance, are but two phases of love. They are so thoroughly blended that perfect love can never exist without either. Humility is so essential to love that unless pride intrudes there is no breach of love in the world.

XLII.

LOVING WITHOUT SEEING.

“WHOM HAVING NOT SEEN, YE LOVE.” It is a fallacious proverb which avers that they are speedily forgotten who are out of sight. If so readily forgotten they were not dear; our love was but shallow or feigned. Absence is to love like wind to fire; it extinguishes the little, but kindles the great to a glowing, glorious flame. “There is no figure so colossal as that of Christ; even the distance does not diminish its proportion.”

Mythology transferred its heroes to the material heavens so as to immortalize them and called the constellations by their names; then on earth they turned them into demi-gods and idolatrously offered incense to their shades.

What is it that we love in any person whomsoever? Look upon the counterfeit of his face on canvas. Does it waken the emotion of love? You may admire the skill of the artist in his work and, if moved by the lifelike expression of the picture, it is because it brings back the

original to your memory and simply suggests the reality of the absent or deceased, the object of your love. Or does the statue stir affection? It may reproduce the features and the form of one beloved, but it is cold marble, without a living soul, without all sense. What we see is not the mere personality or visible presence that lays its hold upon our hearts; it is the qualities of a person, his greatness or his goodness, the excellence of his virtue, the charm of his charity and the benignity of his life.

It is thus we love the absent, whom we can never forget, the father, the mother, the brother, the friend. Our memory is a casket of their graces, their habits, their kindly words, their tender deeds, their noble or beautiful example.

Toward our fellows love is an obligation. That love is qualified by their imperfection; but our own equal imperfection teaches us forbearance. Love toward Christ saddens with no disappointment, needs no repentance, demands no reserve.



XLIII.

THE WHITE STONE.

“TO HIM THAT OVERCOMETH WILL I GIVE TO EAT OF THE HIDDEN MANNA AND I WILL GIVE HIM A WHITE STONE, AND IN THE STONE A NEW NAME WRITTEN, WHICH NO MAN KNOWETH SAVING HE THAT RECEIVETH IT.” There are two common interpretations of these words which we may consider and then dismiss them for a third. Judges of old cast a white pebble into an urn to signify their acquittal of an accused person and a black one to say that he was condemned. The white stone given here to him that overcometh would then mean his justification and release.

Again, when a conqueror in public games was conducted with pomp to his city he was furnished with a white stone with his name inscribed on it, which entitled him to maintenance for life at the public expense. The stone, because square in shape, was called a tessera. A variety of this kind was the tessera of hospitality—a pledge of friendship, of alliance between two persons. An oblong

piece of wood or stone or ivory was divided into two equal parts or squares, on which each of the parties wrote his own name and then exchanged it with the other. It was carefully preserved and handed down even for generations in the same family. When a member of the family travelled, he could, on producing his piece have a claim to hospitality and kind treatment from the other party to the contract.

The white stone is best interpreted thus: Within the chosen or square embroidered breast-plate of judgment, doubled or folded back upon itself to be a receptacle like a purse for some precious thing, and worn by the high priest, there were twelve precious stones, on each of which was the name of a tribe engraven. None but the high priest knew the name written on the white stone. But the new name now written there, is Jesus.

XLIV.

A VANISHING FIGURE.

"THEIR EYES WERE OPENED, THEY KNEW HIM AND HE VANISHED." We do not always recognize the worth of a familiar treasure or estimate its excellence aright until it is about to pass away. Firdausi might suffer unheeded while living, and his contribution of the Shahnameh to the world's epic literature be prized only when he had mouldered to dust. From the soul of his genius a hungry bard has often sung to the ears of parsimony that neglected to give him bread; and a future generation has written the memorial of his merits on a cold slab of stone.

To live in the visible presence of our divine Lord was a delight, to look on that serious face suffused with the glow of love; to hear His heavenly wisdom in the music of His tender speech, to feel the ineffable safety of one's soul near His holy person was a joy to be renewed only amid the fruition of eternal pleasures and enhanced by the vision of the fullness of His glory. Then He will "abide with us" and we with Him, not because "it is toward evening," but because the everlasting "day is at hand," in all its effulgence.

A lovely scene, when once familiar, may be almost disregarded either through the dulness of our indifference or because our minds, aspiring ever, conceive of scenery still more beautiful. A hero may lack dignity and grandeur in the eye of his attendant either because the soul of the inferior has no sympathy with true greatness or because he sees the deformities which disfigure the character of his master. And often both the scenes we admire and the persons we love have other virtues, veiled to careless eyes, which we prize when we are about to lose them, as the plumes of birds in the tropics, whose beauty is hidden when their wings are folded, "brighten as they take their flight."

XLV.

TIME FOR VIGILANCE.

“BUT TARRY YE IN THE CITY OF JERUSALEM UNTIL YE BE ENDUED WITH POWER FROM ON HIGH.” Take a single instance in the mythology of the Pagans. When Romulus had disappeared and the people were anxious for his fate, the patricians bade them to be quiet and not curious, and told them that Romulus had been caught up in the skies and that they should honor and worship him, for that he who had been a gracious king to the Romans would now be their propitious deity. But this exaltation or ascension is evidently a figment, because it was altogether unseen, and it deserves only to be classed among the fables of heathenism.

But the ascension of our Lord was visible. There was the human body, born of Mary, risen from the dead, partaking of material food, wearing the remembered features, looking with the eyes of love, speaking with the lips of wisdom, blessing with the wounded hands, ascending be-

fore the throng of His disciples, overcoming air and cloud with superhuman power.

It is as the loss of day to one who seated in his chamber watches from his window the sinking sun, the fading of the tints of beauty and of glory from the west, the stealing of gray twilight over all the landscape, the dark and chill descent of night. We think, bereaved, when shall the Sun of righteousness arise with cheer and radiance in his healing beams?

How well we remember the absent whom we love! Each word we recall is precious. We cherish his promises. A friend from his presence is greeted with welcome and honored with hospitality. We look with avidity for his messages and grasp and open his letters with an eager hand. We long for the return of the lover of our souls, we will tarry for him.

XLVI.

TIME FOR WORK.

“YE MEN OF GALILEE, WHY STAND YE GAZING UP INTO HEAVEN? THIS SAME JESUS, WHICH IS TAKEN UP FROM YOU INTO HEAVEN, SHALL SO COME IN LIKE MANNER AS YE HAVE SEEN HIM GO INTO HEAVEN.” “The next natural hope of a child after departure of his father on a journey is his coming.”

It would ill comport with Jesus' own lessons if, in looking long after our Lord as he ascends, we neglect those chastening, charitable, fruitful toils that fit us by His grace to live that higher life with Him. The angels said, “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into the heavens?” So, checking their wonder and their musing, they returned to active life, to arduous toil.

We come back from Olivet, our eyes dazzled with images of heavenly felicities and all things here seem poor and miserable by the contrast; but in these same meaner haunts and lowly

works we fit ourselves for endless blessedness in brighter mansions. A little longer in our homes of clay, working for Jesus, molding our will in harmony with His, and we shall surrender to Him our souls in perfect faith and hope and love.

Coleridge knelt as he looked from the vale of Chamouni upward and far upward on that massive mountain, king among the Alps, whose white mantle and snowy summit give it its name. His sight pierced the light vapor that hid its head and rose higher and still higher until it seemed to mingle with the sky and melt into the Deity. The vision filled him with awe and raised him to devotion.

Jesus is our precursor. Through the skies He has tracked for us His triumphal way to the portals of His palace, whence He rules us and where He awaits us.

His last words spoken to us on earth, with a word of benediction, loaded the air with the music of His blessing.

Let us "in heart and mind thither ascend and with Him continually dwell."

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